

# **Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Kinship Care Program in the Lincoln Trail Region**

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Research studies were conducted with the Cabinet for Families and Children, Department for Protection and Permanency, to evaluate the Kinship Care Program. The literature shows that children seem to do better in many areas if placed with a relative versus foster care. The program has only been in effect since 1999.

A chart file review was performed by using non-experimental design. Forty-two open and closed kinship care cases were reviewed. A form was used to review each chart with specific questions asked. An availability sample was used. The variables that were looked at were: age of child, race of child, relationship of relative to child, caretakers age, reason for removal, date of removal, date temporary custody was given to relative, alleged and substantiated abuse or neglect referrals while in the relatives home, if permanent custody has been given, home visits by social worker, and if there were efforts by the parents for reunification.

The quantitative data indicates that the mean age for children in the program is 8 years old. The majority of the children are Caucasian (88%). Grandparents (88%) make up the majority of caretakers. Most of the children were removed for neglect (66.7%). In 85% of the cases reviewed home visits were made by a social worker. There was no relationship evident between parents who have made efforts for reunification and permanency given to the relative by the court.

The qualitative methodology and design was an interview with nine different families that are participating in the kinship care program. The interview was semi-structured with a guide. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The participants were chosen randomly. Qualitative data was analyzed using the Tesch approach.

The major themes found were: most families became familiar with the program through a social worker, "through my social worker after I got temporary custody"; most families have no or limited contact with the children's natural parents, "these parents don't really have any contact with them"; and most interviewed liked the program, "everything, it is fantastic."

The strengths of the study were most families were happy with the program. They were very honest with every question asked, whether the answer for positive or negative about the program. The weaknesses were some of the files reviewed didn't follow policy guidelines by the Cabinet for kinship care, some cases were closed before permanency was given to the family, and cases were opened for dependency of a child. Per policy, cases are only supposed to be approved if the child is found abused or neglected.



Kinship Care Program

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# Kinship Care Objectives

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1. Children will be provided with a safe, stable home while maintaining familial bonds.
  2. Children will avoid the often traumatic experience of living in a foster care home.
  3. The placement will become permanent within six months if the child is unable to return to the home.
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# Quantitative Research Questions

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- What are the characteristics of children receiving Kinship Care?
  - Are home visits made by workers monthly?
  - Is there a relationship with parental efforts and permanency given by the court?
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# Quantitative Research Design

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- Descriptive
  - Chart file review
  - 42 closed/open Kinship Care cases in Lincoln Trail Region
  - non-random availability sample
  - Variables Included:
    - Age of child
    - race of child
    - relationship of care provider to child
    - parental involvement
    - type of problem that prompted removal
    - permanent custody was given.
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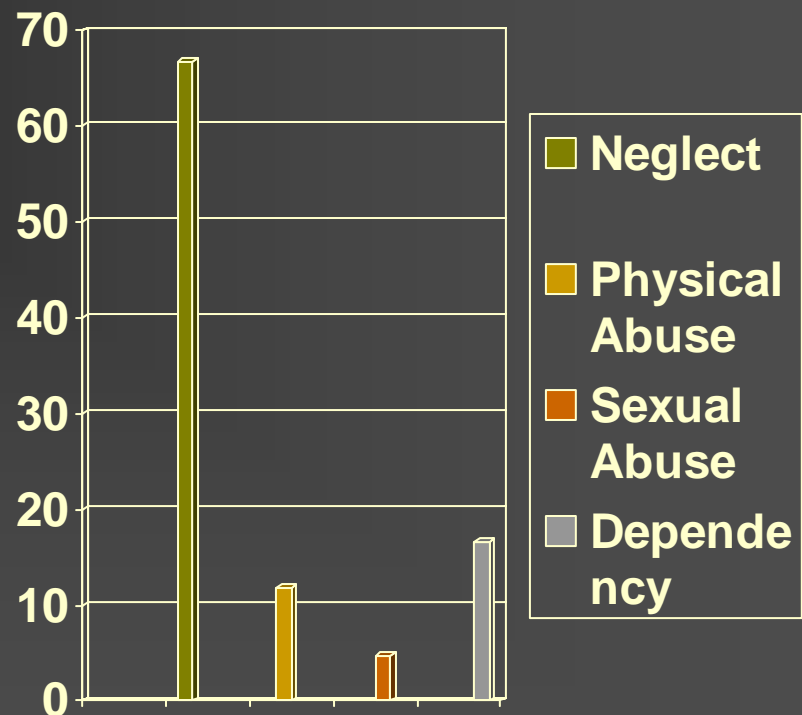
# Characteristics of children in Kinship Care

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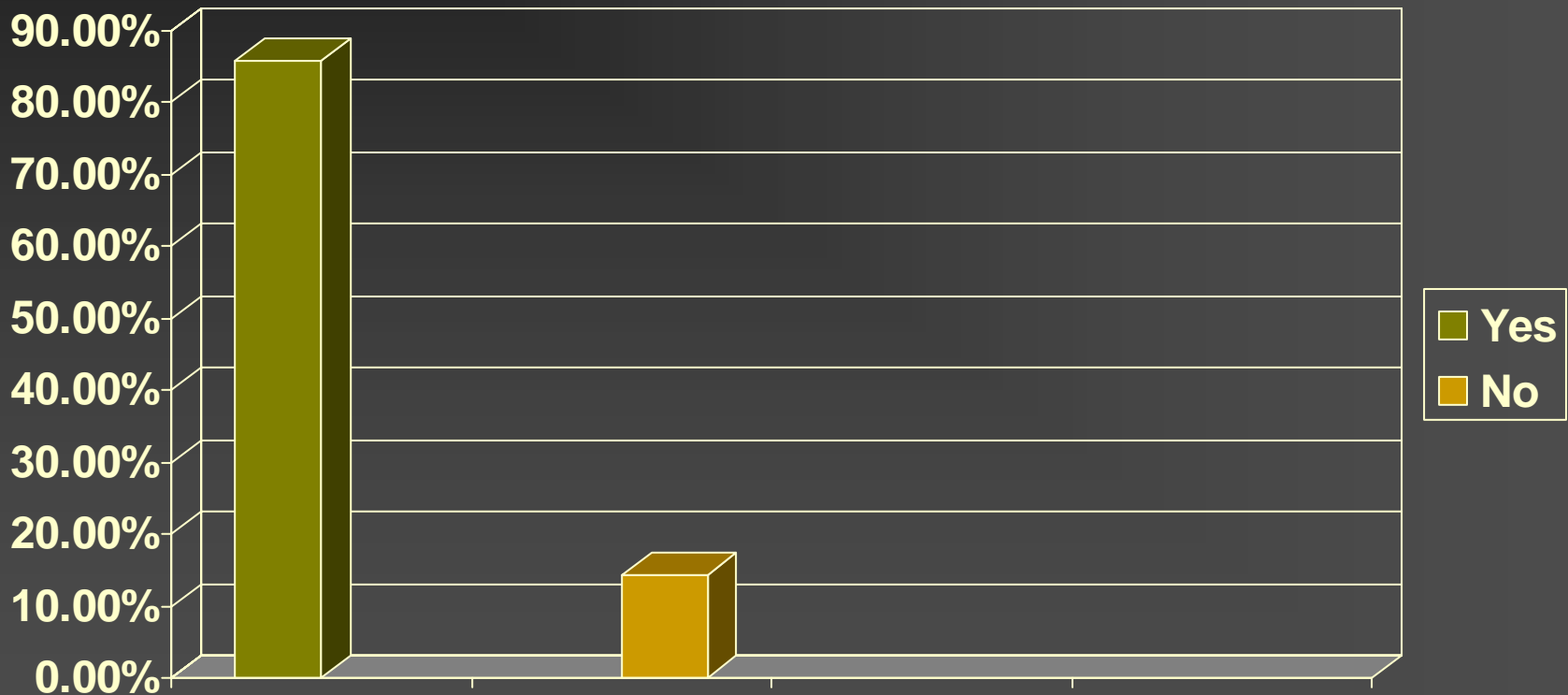
- The mean age of children in the program is 8 years old with SD of 4.81.
  - Caucasian children make up 88%.
  - Grandparents as caretakers take up 88% of the total relative relationship.
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# Characteristics (cont.)

- 66.7% make up the children that were removed from their homes for neglect and placed in Kinship Care.
- 11.9% were removed for physical abuse.
- 4.8% removed for sexual abuse.
- 16.7% were removed for dependency.



# Are home visits made by the social worker monthly?





# Does efforts by the parents have a relationship with permanency given to the relative with custody?

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- A chi-square test was conducted to test the relationship of if efforts by the natural parent to gain the children in their custody and permanency orders given by the court. A non-significant relationship was found (chi-square (1)= .538,  $p = .463$ ).
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# Discussion

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- Children averaged 10 months in KC before permanency was given, the goal is 6 months.
  - In most cases, being put with a relative was the first and only placement for the child.
  - There were no substantiated reports of child abuse/neglect in the relative's home.
  - Reason for removal found didn't follow policy regulations. Dependency is not a qualification for the program.
  - Cases were closed before permanency was given which is a policy violation.
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# Questions for Qualitative Study

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- How did you hear about the Kinship Care Program?
  - How is the relationship with the natural parents?
  - Has services and support for DCBS been helpful?
  - Likes, dislikes, and concerns about the program.
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# Qualitative Research Design

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- Design: Mini-ethnographic interview with families in the Kinship Care program.
  - Sampling: Non-probabilistic purposive sample of 9 families in the Lincoln Trail Region.
  - A semi-structured interview guide was used. An appointment was made with the families.
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# Themes and Salient Quotes

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How families became familiar with the KC program?

“Through the social worker after I got temporary custody.”

“From the social worker in Louisville.”

“I wanted to adopt my grandson, but a worker helped me with Kinship instead.”

How is the relationship with the natural parents since you got custody?

“they never visited very often anyway, not they never come.”

“there parents don’t really have any contact with them.”

“the relationship is awkward with them. We have little to no contact with the parents.”

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# Themes and Salient Quotes

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- Has DCBS services been a support to your family?
  - “no we haven’t gotten a lot of services.”
  - “they have stood behind me and been able to help with anything I have needed.”
  - “the home visits were helpful, along with daycare.”
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# Themes and Salient Quotes

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## ■ Likes?

- “the fact my sister gets some kind of compensation for being in foster care so long.”
- “everything, it is fantastic.”
- “the part about being able to get custody of the children after having them so long.”

## ■ Dislikes?

- “I think it’s a good idea, I like it all.”
  - “Just the part about food stamps. I feel if money was included for food, it would be perfect.”
  - “The parents could take me back to court a total of 2 times per year to try and regain custody.”
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# Discussion for Qualitative

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- It was found majority of the participants have custody of their grandchildren.
  - Most had limited to no contact with the children natural parents.
  - Most families would tell others about the program.
  - Some were concerned the state would take away the program.
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# SUMMARY

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- Strengths: Everyone I contacted about an interview gladly accepted. Most were happy about the program. The research found will benefit the agency. The agency needs to be stricter on the cases they approve and make sure that the worker has done everything they are suppose to do.
  - Limitations: Study is not representative of entire state of KY.
  - To Do Differently: I would interview Kinship Care case workers as well to get a better picture of the whole program.
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